Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission

Request for Applications
Program Year
2007-2008

ISSUED: September 25, 2006
DUE: December 11, 2006

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The following pledge,
recited by each AmeriCorps member
at the beginning of their year of service,
captures the spirit of AmeriCorps:

The AmeriCorps Pledge

I will get things done for America – to make our people safer,
*   smarter and healthier.*
I will bring Americans together to strengthen our communities.
Faced with apathy, I will take action.
Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground.
Faced with adversity, I will persevere.
I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond.
I am an AmeriCorps member, and I will get things done.

NEBRASKA FOREWORD

This year, the Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission (NVSC or The Commission) will be accepting applications to begin its thirteenth year of AmeriCorps. Nebraskans have a solid history of providing innovative national service programming in areas such as education and literacy, conflict mediation, meeting human needs, environmental protection, and public safety.

The Commission strongly recommends that potential applicants thoroughly read and understand this Request for Applications (RFA) prior to writing a response. NVSC also strongly encourages you to review "Does AmeriCorps Fit Your Organization", a series of questions and answers created to inform potential applicants. This document is posted on our website: http://www.nvsc.ne.gov/pdf/fit_your_org.pdf

New and recompeting applicants should follow the application instructions for New AmeriCorps*State Programs. Programs in their first or second year of funding should follow the application instructions for Continuation Programs.

The Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission (NVSC) is committed to providing the most current information available to all applicants. Please check our website, www.nvsc.ne.gov frequently to ensure you are informed of any changes.

AMERICORPS PROGRAMS IN NEBRASKA

The Commission administers and accounts for AmeriCorps funds in Nebraska as required by federal, State and AmeriCorps program rules and regulations. In Program Year (PY) 2006, over 138 AmeriCorps*State members served in 27 of the 93 counties through Commission subgrantees in various communities. These members, and the volunteers they recruited, provided thousands of volunteer service hours in their communities aiding children, youth, and families, throughout the state.

The Commission funds programs that consist of teams of no fewer than eight members. Program applications for funding are subject to review by the Commission and, if funded, programs are subject to Commission oversight.

The Commission requires all applicants to *submit their grants as "competitive" applications in the eGrants* online grant submission program operated by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Following the Commission's review of applications, a determination will be made of which programs are strongest for the Corporation to consider for competitive funds. The remaining applications, and those applications not selected by the Corporation for competitive funds, will be considered for state formula funds. Definitions of Competitive and Formula are provided below.

Competitive funds are available to states to support grant applications. Applications are reviewed on the state level and successful applicants are forwarded with Commission

recommendations and ranking to compete nationally. The Corporation for National and Community Service makes final decisions on Competitive grants for National and Community Service. Established larger multi-site programs and initiatives with sophisticated, well-developed program designs tend to compete well for this pool of funds.

Formula funds are also available to states to support grant applications. Applications are reviewed and compete on the state level. Successful applicants are funded based on the decision of the Commission grant review team and approval by a full Commission vote. Newer and smaller scale programs tend to be supported with Formula funds. **<u>Programs will receive NO MORE THAN SIX (6) YEARS of Formula funding.</u>**

If you need any assistance navigating the online application system – "eGrants" – please contact the Commission.

This current Request for Applications (RFA) is for *new, recompeting and continuing applicants* submitting applications for AmeriCorps State Competitive and Formula Funds. Any Nebraska applicants new to the AmeriCorps State grantmaking process are eligible to apply under this competition. NVSC expects to announce competitive funding decisions by May 15, 2007, and formula decisions soon thereafter. The Commission may or may not consider formula funding for unfunded AmeriCorps State competitive applications. The Nebraska Commission will notify sub applicants of necessary revisions and resubmission that may be needed during the funding process.

Specific aspects of the 2005 AmeriCorps Regulations, 2006 AmeriCorps Provisions, and 2007 AmeriCorps*State Application Instructions that apply to Nebraska are as follows:
- All applications must be submitted electronically using the Corporation for National and Community Service eGrants process. The Commission is eager to assist users to successfully navigate this system and is readily available to provide technical assistance. If there are significant technical difficulties or if there are extenuating circumstances preventing the use of the eGrants system, the Commission will consider requests for submission of a paper document if such requests include a written rationale and are made NO LATER than December 1, 2006.
- The minimum number of AmeriCorps member service years (MSYs) in any application under this RFA is eight (8).
- *All* programs in Nebraska that apply for funds MUST not exceed the cost per member service year (MSY) of $12,600/full-time member. This is the maximum amount of federal funds that may be requested. The total amount of funds available for a project can be determined by multiplying $12,600 times the number of full-time member slots proposed. <u>Actual</u> MSY costs for existing grantees are examined during grant review, and grantees are expected to bid MSY costs accordingly.
- The minimum living allowance was raised to $11,100 for full-time members for 2006-2007. That amount continues to be used for 2007-2008. There is a 15% match requirement for living allowances and related benefits. The matching funds for these expenses must be from <u>non-federal</u> sources.
- Child Care is a benefit for income eligible AmeriCorps members. Funding for child care for AmeriCorps members is provided directly from the Corporation for National & Community Service and is not included as a budgeted expense through

this RFA. Eligibility standards that members must meet can be found in the Nebraska State Median Income Chart that can be found at http://www.hhss.ne.gov/chc/ccsubsypa.htm

- The NVSC has decided not to accept applications for planning grants at this time. Potentially, opportunities for planning grants could be offered in the spring of 2007.
- For PY 07-08, the NVSC will not accept any Educational Award Only applications unless potential applicants include a discussion on how they will support and manage such programs within their organization with the limited funding resources [$600 per member] available for such programming. **Please contact the Commission if you are interested in submitting an Education Award Only Program application**.
- All applicants must include their organizational DUNS (Data Universal Number System) as part of the application. The Commission strongly suggests that new applicants immediately apply for a DUNS number if your organization does not currently have one.

The Commission is very concerned about supporting a diversity of programs, including those that provide geographic breadth across our state. Western and Central regions of the state have traditionally been under-represented by AmeriCorps programs. To address this, geographic representation in Central and Western frontier and rural Nebraska will be a factor in the review and selection of grantees.

At the time this Request for Applications is being released, the final federal budget to support AmeriCorps activities during the next program year has not been approved by Congress and the President. Resources for AmeriCorps programming are always limited and we advise potential applicants to clearly understand that there might be even more limited resources available for AmeriCorps in the coming year depending on the decisions of Congress.

This situation makes it imperative for applicants to carefully put together a proposal that will meet the demands of a potentially strong competition for funds in the new program year and to consider creative, innovative collaborations. NVSC also encourages applicants to carefully identify ways these activities can be supported with local resources should CNCS funding be reduced or eliminated. Reaching out to new partners and introducing visionary service methods can be a solution for Nebraska communities.

We are eager to partner with you in enhancing civic engagement and the quality of life in our state. Please contact us freely as you develop and draft your applications. Thank you for your interest and efforts.

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Barbara Wilson Thomas, M.S.E.
Executive Director
Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission

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Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

NOTICE OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)

Federal Agency Name: Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)

AmeriCorps State and National Programs

State Commission Name: Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission

Funding Opportunity Title: AmeriCorps State and National Grant Programs FY2007

Announcement Type: Initial announcement

CFDA No.: 94.006

Key Dates: See Table below

AmeriCorps State & National Grant Program Dates for New, Recompeting and Continuing Grants

APPLICANTS	NEBRASKA RFA DEADLINE	CNCS DEADLINE	CNCS GRANT AWARD ANNOUNCEMENT
New, Recompeting, and Continuing Competitive and Formula Applicants	Monday, December 11, 2006	Thursday, January 25, 2007	Tuesday, May 15, 2007

2007-2008 Nebraska Focus Areas: In accordance with the Corporation's mission to improve lives, strengthen communities and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering, the Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission will give special consideration to projects in addition to the emphasis on rural and frontier geographic representation in Nebraska. The PY 2007-2008 competition will address one or a combination of four strategic initiatives that meet critical needs of our nation, achieve national service goals and address community problems:
1. **Mobilizing more volunteers.**
2. **Ensuring a brighter future for all of America's youth.**
3. **Engaging students in communities.**
4. **Harnessing baby boomers' experience.**

Additional programs and program models that may receive special consideration in the selection process are described in the AmeriCorps regulation §2522.450 (http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/45CFR_chapterXXV.pdf). The Commission and the Corporation for National and Community Service reserve the right to re-focus program dollars in the event of disaster or other compelling need and will make an announcement in this event.

Additionally, Nebraska will favorably consider applications which meaningfully incorporate Cross Stream (involving AmeriCorps*VISTA, Senior Corps, Learn & Serve, Citizen Corps) program development into their design.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY ANNOUNCEMENT

I. Federal Funding Opportunity Description

Available Grants: The Corporation for National and Community Service (hereinafter the "Corporation'') announces the anticipated availability of approximately $88,000,000 nationally to award to new and re-competing AmeriCorps State and National grant programs for Federal FY2007. These are the AmeriCorps States and Territories Competitive Program, State Education Award Program, National Direct Program, National Education Award Program, National Planning Grants Program, National Professional Corps Program, Indian Tribes Program, and States and Territories without Commissions Program. Of those funds, the Corporation anticipates that at least 15% will support applicants that have not received AmeriCorps operational grants for the last five years.

This Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission Request for Applications (RFA) pertains exclusively to new, recompeting and continuing AmeriCorps*State programs to be considered for Competitive and Formula funds.

Authority: These funds will be available under authority of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. §§12571-12595).

Purpose of Grants: For more than a decade, the Corporation for National and Community Service—through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve programs—has mobilized a new generation of engaged citizens. This year, more than 1.8 million individuals of all ages and backgrounds will serve through these programs. They will help thousands of national and community nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, schools, and local agencies meet local needs in education, the environment, public safety, homeland security, and other critical areas. For example, in 2005-2006, more than 21,000 national service volunteers contributed to hurricane relief and recovery across the country.

Period of Grants: The Corporation generally makes grant awards for a period that covers three years, with funding made available in annual increments. The funding available in 2007 are for Year One operations. Grantees will be eligible for continuation funding in the second and third year contingent upon the availability of appropriations, compliance, and satisfactory performance.

About AmeriCorps: AmeriCorps programs provide grants to initiate, improve, or expand the ability of organizations and communities to provide services to address local unmet needs. AmeriCorps awards member positions and program operating funds to public and private nonprofit organizations with goals which are in accord with this mission. Grants support organizations that use volunteer service as a strategy for addressing national and community needs, while fostering an ethic of civic responsibility and connecting Americans

of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to serve their communities and country. Please see the Corporation's statutes and regulations for more information at www.americorps.gov/ .

AmeriCorps taps into and further develops the skills, talents, and experience of Americans to address a wide range of community challenges. AmeriCorps grants are awarded to organizations that propose to utilize AmeriCorps members to address unmet community needs. AmeriCorps members are individuals who commit to engage in community service. Members may receive a living allowance during their term of service, and upon successful completion of their service, all who serve full-time receive an education award of $4,725. The amount is pro-rated for a member serving less than full-time.

Members engage in a range of activities such as recruiting and supporting community volunteers, providing translation services in community clinics, conducting safety patrols for local police departments, participating in environmental projects, conducting outreach and referral services for the homeless, tutoring and mentoring young people, helping homebound seniors and other adults maintain independence in their own homes, and responding to natural disasters. The grant funds matched with local funds cover expenses directly related to the AmeriCorps program.

Description of AmeriCorps State and National Grants: AmeriCorps grants are made in two general categories: (1) State grants, which are made through Governor-appointed State Commissions to organizations nominated by those commissions; and (2) direct grants, which are made directly by the Corporation to organizations operating in multiple States, in a single State or territory without an approved State Commission, or to American Indian Tribes. National Direct Grants include National Direct, National Education Award Program, National Professional Corps, Indian Tribes and National Planning Grants. This Request for Applications (RFA) pertains only to State Grants.

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AmeriCorps State Grants

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States and Territories Competitive: These grants are awarded to organizations operating in a single State that are nominated to participate in a nationwide competition by Governor-appointed State Commissions. The organizations selected in this category receive grants to support AmeriCorps member positions through the State Commission.

State Education Award Program: These grants are awarded to organizations operating in a single state that are nominated to participate in a nationwide competition by Governor-appointed State Commissions. Grantees receive a small administrative grant – approximately $600 for each Member Service Year (MSY) – and use their own or other resources to cover AmeriCorps members' living allowance and other program costs.

II. Award Information

Requirements and Criteria: Program requirements, including the criteria against which applications will be assessed are located in the new AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR §§

2520 -2550 at http://www.americorps.gov/about/ac/americorps_rule_register.pdf. These regulations took effect September 6, 2005, sixty days after they were published in the *Federal Register.* This NOFO should be read together with the regulations and the AmeriCorps application instructions for the program to which you are applying) http://www.americorps.org/pdf/06_0618_nofo_ac_instructions.pdf
These application instructions are also appropriate for formula applications.

Please be aware that this RFA modifies the national Instructions to address specific needs and concerns in the State of Nebraska. It takes precedence over the application instructions promulgated by the Corporation. Relevant federal statutes governing the design and implementation of AmeriCorps programming include:

Table 1: Program Requirements in the AmeriCorps Regulations

Requirements and Selection	Citation in the AmeriCorps Regulations
Member Service Activities	§2520.20 - §2520.55
Prohibited Activities	§2520.65
Tutoring Programs	§2522.900-2522.950
Matching Funds	§2521.35-2521.90
Member Benefits	§2522.240-2522.250
Calculating Cost Per Member Service Year (MSY)	§2522.485
Performance Measures	§2522.500-2522.650
Evaluation	§2522.500-2522.540 and §2522.700-2522.740
Selection Criteria and Selection Process	§2522.400-2522.475

If there is any inconsistency between the AmeriCorps regulations, the NOFO, and the Application Instructions, the order of precedence is as follows:
1. AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR §§ 2520-2550
2. NOFO
3. Application Instructions

III. Eligibility Information

Eligibility: The Commission and Corporation want to ensure that all eligible organizations are able to compete on an equal basis for federal financial assistance. Public or private non-profit organizations, including labor organizations; community organizations, including faith-based organizations; institutions of higher education; states and territories; government entities of states or territories (e.g., cities, counties); Indian Tribes; and partnerships or consortia consisting of the aforementioned, are eligible to apply for AmeriCorps grant programs funding. **Applicants that have never received funding from the Corporation or AmeriCorps are encouraged to apply for funding under this Notice.**

Intermediary organizations are also encouraged to apply for AmeriCorps funding. An intermediary organization provides the mechanism by which a number of community organizations, including faith-based organizations or grassroots groups may access AmeriCorps and other Corporation resources. Intermediaries are national, regional, state, or local organizations that agree to provide the technical and financial support to assist

community organizations, including faith-based organizations that do not have the capacity to perform these functions.

An intermediary serves as the legal applicant for a Corporation grant, thereby ensuring that the systems to manage the federal grant are in place. An intermediary may place individual members at the site of many neighborhood, community or faith-based organizations and assumes responsibility for monitoring the progress of the sites. An intermediary organization may apply for AmeriCorps funding if it is one of the types of eligible organizations listed above, and meets other program-specific eligibility requirements.

Any organization described in Section 501 (c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 501 (c)(4) that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply, serve as a host site for member placements, or act in any type of supervisory role in AmeriCorps programs.

Organizations that currently operate a Corporation-funded program or are applying for other Corporation funding are eligible applicants. However, applicants must differentiate between the proposed project and the currently funded project or pending application. For example, an operating site of a National Direct program cannot submit an application for funding for the same project through a State Commission.

IV. Application Instructions: For AmeriCorps State Grants in Nebraska

Deadline

APPLICATION DEADLINE: December 11, 2006, 5:00 CST

Your AmeriCorps State grant applications should be submitted via eGrants [unless you have received prior permission to submit a paper version], **by the December 11, 2006 deadline at 5:00 p.m. CST**. Please check to see you are in compliance regarding the character count of your application as they apply to new/recompeting and continuation applicants. In addition, please submit by hand delivery, mail, or express courier copies of appropriate documents if not available electronically. These attachments include copies of internal or independent evaluations and your most recent OMB A-133 audit of your legal applicant's organization, if your organization has received federal grants exceeding $500,000 or more. **These documents must ARRIVE in the Commission office by the December 10, 2006 deadline at 5:00 p.m. CST.**

Please mail supporting documentation (A-133 audits and other required documents) to:
Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission
P.O. Box 98927
Lincoln, NE 68509-8927

If sending via UPS/FedEx:
Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission
State Capitol, 6th Floor
1445 K Street
Lincoln, NE 68509

eGrants Application Process

All grant applications must be submitted electronically using the Corporation's eGrants system. Training and ongoing technical assistance will be available on use of the eGrants system. Please contact Peter Cales at (402) 471-6228 or peter.cales@hhss.ne.gov to discuss your training and technical assistance needs.

The following information will make the use of eGrants simpler and minimize concerns:

- **We strongly encourage you to create your eGrants account and begin your application at least three weeks or more prior to the NE Commission's submission deadline.** This will allow you time to address technical issues prior to the deadline.
- We suggest you first prepare and save your application as a word processing document prior to inputting it into eGrants, then copy and paste the document into eGrants.
- If you encounter difficulties using eGrants, contact: (1) Peter Cales, NVSC at (402) 471-6228 or peter.cales@hhss.ne.gov , (2) the national eGrants Help Desk at 888-677-7849 or 202-606-7506, or (3) by email at egrantshelp@cns.gov by 4:00 pm Central Standard Time since eGrants technical support is currently based on the east coast.
- Use only uppercase letters for all section headings and other information you would like to highlight in your narrative. **Bold face, bullets, underlines, or other types of formatting, charts, diagrams, and tables will not copy into eGrants. Do not use any of these in your application.**
- Adhere to all the character limits indicated in the application instructions. Characters include all the letters, punctuation, and spaces in your document. Your word processing software (e.g., Microsoft Word ©) can provide a character count.

Paper Applications: If there are significant technical challenges or if you are unable to submit your application in eGrants, you may submit a paper application if you request and receive prior permission from the Commission by December 1, 2006. This permission will be granted only in exceptional cases.

In submitting a paper application, following these instructions:

- Type and double-space the application in Times New Roman, 12-point font size with one-inch margins.
- Adhere to the character limits listed in the application instructions and number all pages. Ensure a footer that identifies the RFA applicant on each page.
- Submit one unbound, single-sided original paper application. Also submit an electronic version of your application on diskette or CD-ROM in order to expedite processing. The diskette version must be an exact duplicate of the paper original and will be used to copy and paste your application information into eGrants. If there are differences between the paper application and the diskette or CD-ROM, we will use the diskette or CD-ROM version. Faxed or emailed versions of your application will not be accepted**.**

- With your paper application, please include, in hard copy, a brief paragraph that describes the technical issues that prevented you from submitting in eGrants.

Equal Opportunity Survey: Applicants are asked to complete the Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants. You may complete the survey in eGrants while preparing your application for submission or contact the Commission or Corporation (Section VII. below) to obtain a copy.

Universal Identifier: Applications must include a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. The DUNS number is an identifier that helps the federal government improves statistical reports on federal grants and cooperative agreements. The DUNS number does not replace your Employer Identification Number.

DUNS numbers may be obtained at no cost by calling the DUNS number request line at (866) 705-5711 or by applying online at www.dnb.com. The website indicates a 24-hour email turnaround time on requests for DUNS numbers; however, **we suggest registering at least 30 days in advance of the application due date**. Expedited DUNS numbers may be obtained by telephone at a cost of $99 by calling the DUNS number request line. Applications without DUNS numbers or with invalid DUNS numbers are subject to rejection.

Current Grantees Submitting Continuation Requests: Grantees that are currently in their first or second year of operation within a three-year grant cycle may submit a request for continued funding. Use the Instructions for Continuation Requests in the application instructions for the program to which you are applying. In assessing your request for continued funding, we will consider a grantee's progress to date in meeting performance measures for the current grant period, compliance with grant requirements, and information from our information management systems, including enrollment and retention rates. The Corporation and the Commission consider 90% to be a reasonable rate of enrollment and retention. **If your enrollment and retention rates are below these levels, provide an explanation and describe your plans for improving these rates in your continuation request.**

Enrollment Rate:	Number of Slots Filled/Number of Slots Awarded = Enrollment Rate
Retention Rate:	Number of Slots Receiving an Ed Award/Number of Slots Filled = Retention Rate

Funding Restrictions: Grants under this program are subject to the applicable Cost Principles under OMB Circulars A-21, A-122, A-87 or FAR 31.2.

V. Review and Selection Process

Information on the review and selection process, including the criteria against which the applications are evaluated and their respective weights, is located in the AmeriCorps regulations 45 CFR § 2520- 2550 (http://www.americorps.gov/about/ac/americorps rule register.pdf)

For this review, the Commission will convene a grant review team that will review and score all applications seeking Competitive and Formula funds. Based on the recommendations of the grant review team, the Commission will make preliminary decisions regarding the allocation of Formula funds. At that time, the Commission will also determine which programs to refer for national Competitive consideration. Final decisions will be upon determination of Competitive funding by the Corporation. It is anticipated that this will occur in May 2007. Applicants may be asked to modify and enhance their application during this review process.

VI. Award Administration Information

Award Notices: Selected applicants may be approved to negotiate with the Corporation for a grant award. The Commission will coordinate the negotiation of most of the terms with subapplicants following receipt of the results of the Grant Application Review Process from the Corporation. During the negotiation period, you must satisfactorily resolve any questions or issues identified during the review of your application before the Corporation will approve a final award of your grant. The grant negotiation period may range from three weeks to two months, or longer. After s*uccessful* conclusion of grant negotiations, the Corporation will award the grant.

Education Awards: After successfully completing a term of service, AmeriCorps members who are enrolled in the National Service Trust are eligible to receive an education award. The education award should not be included in your proposal's budget. The education award can be used to pay education costs at qualified institutions of higher education or training, or to repay qualified student loans. The award currently is $4,725 for a year of full-time service, with correspondingly lesser awards for part-time and reduced part-time service. A member has up to seven years after his or her term of service has ended to claim the award.

Pursuant to the Strengthen AmeriCorps Program Act of 2003, in budgeting for education awards the Corporation discounts the full value ($157 million for new and continuations) of the projected awards based on enrollment, earning, and usage rates and interest earned by the National Service Trust.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements: Administrative requirements are identified in the application instructions. National policy requirements are noted under Part I. Funding Opportunity Description of this Notice and are otherwise identified in the Application Instructions. The AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR § 2520.20- 2550, which can be found at http://www.americorps.gov/about/ac/americorps_rule_register.pdf and other specific conditions are incorporated in the Notice of Grant Award (NGA). The NGA also incorporates your approved application as part of your binding commitments under this grant.

VII. Commission and Corporation Contacts

This Notice, with the complete Application Instructions, AmeriCorps regulations, and other relevant material, is available at the Commission website: www.nvsc.ne.gov or on the Corporation's website at www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa_detail.asp?tbl_nofa_id=14

Commission staff can be reached at (800) 291-8911 or (402) 471-6225. Please identify yourself as a potential applicant for AmeriCorps funding when calling. You may also reach the Commission via e-mail at Peter.Cales@hhss.ne.gov for program and training questions or Janet.Schmidt@hhss.ne.gov for financial questions.

VIII. Other Information

Technical Assistance: The Commission will provide technical assistance for applicants.

In-Person TA Session -
An in-person eGrant technical assistance session will be scheduled in late October 2006 in Lincoln.   Please RSVP to the Commission office at (402) 471-6228, 1-800-291-8911, or by e-mail to peter.cales@hhss.ne.gov by October 16, 2006 to attend the eGrants TA session.

Written TA on the NVSC Website -
The Commission will respond to all questions in writing every two weeks on Mondays beginning October 23, 2006. The questions and answers will be posted on the Commission website October 23, November 6, November 20, and December 4, 2006 depending upon the extent of the questions the Commission receives regarding the RFA. Questions regarding the RFA should be addressed to the following staff:
- Peter Cales for program and training questions
  - Peter.cales@hhss.ne.gov
  - (402) 471-6228
- Janet Schmidt for financial questions
  - Janet.schmidt@hhss.ne.gov
  - (402) 471-6225

Orientation to AmeriCorps for New Applicants -
NVSC staff will schedule an AmeriCorps Orientation in October for any organization that has never been an NVSC Subgrantee and would like to consider submitting an RFA for the 2007-2008 funds. Please call the Commission office at (402) 471-6225 to arrange the orientation.

Applicants are encouraged to proactively pursue opportunities to learn more about AmeriCorps and other national service opportunities.

NOTE: Publication of this announcement does not obligate the Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission or the Corporation to award any specific number of grants or to obligate the entire amount of funds available, or any part thereof, for grants under the AmeriCorps State and National Program.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR
NEW AND RECOMPETING PROGRAMS

The following application instructions contain the information that new and recompeting AmeriCorps applicants must provide in their application for the following programs: State Competitive, State Formula, and State Education Award. Recompeting programs are programs which are in their third year of a three-year funding cycle at the time of submission of the PY 2007-2008 application.

Use these AmeriCorps State grant instructions specific to Nebraska applicants in conjunction with the Notice of Funds Available (NOFA) or Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the year in which you are applying and the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 C.F.R. §§ 2520 - 2550, which are available online at http://www.americorps.gov/about/ac/americorps_rule_register.pdf   The NOFA or NOFO include eligibility requirements, submission requirements, and other information that changes year-to-year, for all AmeriCorps grant programs. The NOFA or NOFO can be found at www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa_detail.asp?tbl_nofa_id=14 This site also includes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that will help you in your application process.

General Submission Information
Your application consists of the following components. Please make sure to complete each one.

I.	**SF424 Facesheet**	**(Appendix A)**
II.	**Program Model, Design, Location and Focus**	**(Appendix B)**
III.	**Narrative**	
IV.	**Service Categories**	**(Appendix C)**
V.	**Performance Measurements**	**(Appendix D)**
VI.	**Budget**	**(Appendix E, F, and I)**
VII.	**Additional Required Information**	
VIII.	**Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants (Appendix J)**	
IX.	**Authorization, Assurances and Certifications**	**(Appendix K)**

Application Instructions
The information in parentheses in the headings, below, corresponds to the eGrants section where you will input the requested information.

I. SF424 Facesheet (Applicant and Application Information Section)

In eGrants, complete the Applicant and Application Information sections. For paper applications, please see the instructions in _Appendix A_.

II. Program Model, Design, Location and Focus (Application Section)

In eGrants, complete the Program Model and Design section in the Application Section. This section is particularly important for Corporation data collection and evaluation. Please take the time to reflect your primary program activities accurately in this section. For paper applications, please see the instructions in *Appendix B*.

III. Narrative (Narrative Section)

In this section, you will make the case that you have a well-designed program plan with a clear and compelling justification for the requested funds. Your narrative should cover the three-year program period for which you are requesting funds.

Please provide headings for each section of your Program Narrative such as: *Executive Summary, Summary of Accomplishments and Outcomes, Program Design (as well as Sub-Headings here), Organizational Capacity, and Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy.* These headings should be capitalized since when you transfer this information into eGrants, it has no formatting capability.

As you complete each section of the narrative, you **must stay within the character limits** specified in the table below.

RFA Character Number Limits

Narrative Item	Maximum Number of Characters (including spaces and punctuation)
A. Executive Summary	4,000 characters
B. Summary of Accomplishments and Outcomes (if applicable)	8,000 characters

C. Program Design (50%)
    1) Rationale and Approach (10%)
    2) Member Outputs and Outcomes (20%)
    3) Community Outputs and Outcomes including the Evaluation (20%)
	71,000 characters for Sections C, D, and E combined
	
	 Important Note: In eGrants, enter text for C, D and E into the fields for Rationale and Approach, Member Outputs and Outcomes, Community Outputs and Outcomes, Organizational Capability, and Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy. Each of these fields has a 32,000-character limit. This allows for some flexibility in how you split your narrative between these fields. You may not exceed 71,000 characters in total for Sections C, D and E combined.

D. Organizational Capability (25%)	

E. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25%)
    1) Cost Effectiveness (15%)
    2) Budget Adequacy (10%)	

Total Maximum Number of Characters per Application	**83,000**

A. Executive Summary
Provide a concise overview of your proposed program that summarizes the purpose, need, planned service activities to address the need, anticipated outcomes, and how you will measure these outcomes. Please include your organization's mission statement. If you are requesting a waiver from the requirement that you recruit or support volunteers, please note that you are doing so here.

B. Summary of Accomplishments and Outcomes
1. **If your organization currently receives AmeriCorps funds,** provide a clear description of the accomplishments, outputs, and outcomes you have achieved to date in relation to your AmeriCorps performance measures for the current grant period.

2. **If you have received other Corporation program funds of any type within the past three years**, list the amounts you have received from each Corporation program (i.e., AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps*VISTA, Senior Corps, Learn & Serve).

C. Program Design

The following sections include elements that will contribute to your successful response to the criteria as articulated in the AmeriCorps regulations. Although they are closely based on the criteria articulated in the AmeriCorps regulations, they are not to be confused with the criteria themselves. The criteria can be found in AmeriCorps regulations, 45 C.F.R. §§ 2522.420 – 2522.448, along with additional information about what reviewers will assess within each category. We strongly suggest that you review the regulations as well as the NOFA or NOFO and these instructions before preparing your narrative.

1. **Rationales and Approach**
   a) **Compelling Community Need:**
      - Describe a compelling community need that you will address within the target community.
      - Include a description of how you identified the need and where it is documented.
      - **If your program will operate at multiple sites**, demonstrate a compelling need in each community you propose to serve.
   b) **Description of Activities and Member Roles:**
      - Provide a detailed description of the activities you propose to address the need.
      - Describe members' roles in these activities and how they relate to addressing the need.
      - Explain your program structure including where members will serve (for example, at the applicant organization or at local service sites).
      - Explain how the types of member slots you are requesting (for example, full-time, half-time, quarter-time) align with the program design and activities.
      - Describe how you will ensure member compliance with rules on prohibited service activities, including how members will be informed of prohibited activities and monitored for compliance by program staff. See 45 C.F.R. § 2520.65 for a list of prohibited service activities.
   c) **Measurable Outputs and Outcomes:**
      - Describe the measurable outputs and outcomes you expect to achieve as a result of your activities.
      - **Note**: In Section V. Performance Measures, you will develop your measurable outputs and outcomes in more detail, including how they will be measured, your targets for each year, and the data you will gather.
   d) **Plan for Self-Assessment and Improvement:**

- Describe your plans for tracking and evaluating progress toward meeting and achieving your performance measures.
- Provide plans for continuous program improvement, such as how you will identify strengths and weaknesses, resolve problems, and gather feedback from and provide feedback to members, service sites, and partners.

e) **Community Involvement:**
- Describe how you involved the target community (or target communities) in identifying the needs and the planning process. Be specific in explaining which community partners and stakeholders were involved, what roles they played, and what their responsibilities were.
- Explain how you will continue to engage your community partners and stakeholders throughout the three-year program. Be specific in describing their roles and responsibilities.

f) **Relationship to other National and Community Service Programs:**
The Commission values the stewardship and synergy inherent in cross-stream collaboration, and encourages applicants to work meaningfully with AmeriCorps*VISTA, Learn & Serve, Senior Corps and Citizen Corps programs. Describe the extent to which your program builds on (without duplicating), or reflects collaboration with, other national and community service programs supported by the Corporation.

g) **Potential for Replication:**
- Describe the extent to which your program is designed to be replicated.
- Discuss any plans or strategies for replication.

2. **Member Outputs and Outcomes**
a) **Member Recruitment and Recognition:**
- Describe in detail your plans for recruiting members for your program.
- Describe the criteria you will use to select your members, including specific qualifications, characteristics, or backgrounds.
- Describe how you will actively seek a corps that is diverse and that includes members from the communities to be served.
- Explain how you will reward members for their service and how you will demonstrate members' satisfaction with their service.
- Describe your plan for providing incentives to members such as opportunities for skill-building and professional development, educational opportunity or benefit, promoting esprit de corps, and recognizing members' achievements.
- Discuss how you will retain members in your program and promote their successful completion of a full term of service.
- **Tutoring programs only**: Describe how your strategy for recruiting and selecting members complies with AmeriCorps requirements for member tutoring qualifications. See 45 C.F.R. §§2522.900-2522.930.

b) **Member Development, Training and Supervision:**
- Describe in detail your plans for orienting members to AmeriCorps, the community, their placement site, and to the service they will perform.
- Describe in detail how you will adequately train members to perform all the activities they will engage in and, as necessary, provide them with ongoing

training throughout their terms. Up to 20% of member hours may be devoted to member development and training. The Commission strongly suggests that a <u>minimum</u> of 12% of member hours be dedicated to member development and training.
- Provide a general timeline for training and identify the training curricula and materials you will use. This will include Commission-supported mandatory member development activities: 1) The Program Year Kick-Off (Fall) 2) The Governor's Conference on Community Service (Spring) and 3) the Year End Reflection (Summer).
- Describe a member supervision plan that ensures members will receive adequate support and guidance throughout their terms.
- **Tutoring programs only**: Describe how your strategy for training members complies with AmeriCorps requirements for member tutor training. See 45 C.F.R. §§ 2522.940 – 2522.950.

c) **Ethic of Service and Civic Responsibility:** Demonstrate how you will incorporate training and service-learning activities that include structured opportunities for participants to reflect on and learn from their service in order to promote a lifelong ethic of service and civic responsibility.

d) **Member Enrollment and Retention:**
- **Current grantees only**, AmeriCorps will review your enrollment and retention rates (in percentages) on an annual basis. The Corporation and the Commission consider 90% to be a reasonable rate of enrollment and retention.
- Provide an explanation if your enrollment and retention rates are below the rates specified in the NOFA or NOFO and describe your plans for improving these rates.

e) **Measurable Outputs and Outcomes: Current grantees only**, describe your success in meeting performance measures for AmeriCorps members, if you have them, including any applicable AmeriCorps national performance measures articulated in the NOFA or NOFO, and including outputs and outcomes.

3. **Community Outputs and Outcomes**
   a) **Community Impact and Evaluation:**
   - Evaluate and describe the extent to which your program will meet targeted, compelling community needs, OR
   - Current grantees only, discuss the extent to which your program:
     o Has met community-based performance measures, outputs and outcomes in previous grants cycles (including progress to date in the current grant cycle and, if applicable, previous awards), and
     o Will continue to expand and increase its reach and impact in the community.
     o Describe your plan internal evaluation.
   b) **Sustainability:**
   - Outline your plans for ensuring that the impact of your program in the community is sustainable beyond the presence of federal support.
   - For example, you might describe how your community relationships will lead to community investment in the program's continued operation, how you will diversify your funding sources to include a wide range of stakeholders (such as state, local, and private sector funding); how your strategies for recruiting and

supporting both community volunteers, and other national service volunteers (such as Senior Corps members) will sustain member activities after your AmeriCorps grant ends; or how the community will maintain your project once it is complete.

> **EAP Applicants: Sustainability**
> The Corporation and the Commission recognize that Education Award Programs are clear examples of sustainable programs from a financial perspective. In evaluating EAP applications in the selection process, we will consider the extent to which your program demonstrates sustainability with components such as descriptions of the sustainable impact in the community or indicators that members continue to show an ethic of service after serving in AmeriCorps.

c) **Volunteer Recruitment and Support**
- The Corporation and Commission expect all members to recruit and support volunteer involvement.
- Describe how your program will use volunteers to expand the reach of the program in the community.
- Include in this description a discussion of how you will recruit, support, and recognize volunteers.
- Identify how many volunteers you expect to recruit and the number of hours of service they will provide, in total and on average. Also discuss if your volunteers will be episodic (committing to one-time or occasional events) or ongoing (committing to a regular, ongoing role in the program). If selected for funding, you will be expected to report on your actual volunteer recruitment levels.
- Describe the role that members will play in your volunteer recruitment and support efforts.
- **If you are requesting a waiver of the requirement to recruit or support volunteers** (see 45 C.F.R. § 2520.35), state your request in the Executive Summary and explain the basis for your request in the fields provided in eGrants. If you are submitting a paper application, explain the basis for your waiver request in the program narrative.
- Your state commission must approve your request for a waiver of the volunteer requirement before it is forwarded to the Corporation.

d) **Capacity Building:**
- Describe how your program will enhance the capacity of your organization, service sites, and, as applicable, other organizations and institutions important to the community, such as schools, homeland security organizations, neighborhood watch organizations, civic associations, and community organizations, including faith-based organizations.
- Explain members' roles in your capacity-building activities.

D. Organizational Capability

1. **Sound Organizational Structure**
   a) **Ability to Provide Sound Programmatic and Fiscal Oversight:**

- Provide a brief history of your organization and the year your organization was established.
- Describe your organization's experience in the proposed areas of activity and your experience operating and overseeing a program comparable to the one proposed. Include specific examples of your prior accomplishments and outcomes.
- Describe your capacity to manage a federal grant and to provide on site monitoring of the financial and other systems required to administer an AmeriCorps grant.
- <u>Explain how receiving an AmeriCorps grant will add value to any existing service activities you perform in these areas.</u>
- **If you are proposing a multi-site program or statewide initiative model**:
  - Explain how you are able to support and oversee service sites.
  - Describe your process for selecting service sites and ensuring they have adequate programmatic and financial capabilities. Include information about how your site selection process incorporates the criteria required by AmeriCorps Regulations. See 45 C.F.R. § 2522.475.
  - Describe your current or previous programmatic and funding relationships with the sites.
  - Describe your plans for monitoring sites' compliance with fiscal and programmatic requirements, including the development of site agreements or memoranda of understanding.
  - Discuss how you will develop connections among the sites through common program elements or activities to ensure that your overall mission and vision for the AmeriCorps program is maintained at each site.

b) **Board of Directors, Administrators, and Staff:**
- Describe your organization's management and staff structure and how the board of directors (if applicable), administrators, and staff members will be used to support your program.
- Identify the key program and fiscal positions responsible for your proposed program. Describe the background and experience of key staff members, or your plans to recruit, select, train, and support additional staff if necessary.

c) **Plan for Self-Assessment or Improvement:**
- Describe how your organization undertakes ongoing assessment and improvement of its systems, structure, staffing, and other capacities to ensure that it remains sound and well managed.

d) **Plan for Effective Technical Assistance:**
- Demonstrate how you are able to provide or secure any needed financial and programmatic technical assistance for your program, and if applicable, your service sites.
- Describe plans for providing financial and programmatic orientation, training and technical assistance to your program and service sites.
- Explain how you will identify and respond to your programs' and, if applicable, your service sites' ongoing training and technical assistance needs.

2. **Sound Record of Accomplishment as an Organization**

a) **Volunteer Generation and Support:**
- Describe how your organization recruits and supports a diverse group of volunteers to increase your own organizational capacity (as distinguished from how you use volunteers to expand the reach of the program in the community).

b) **Organizational and Community Leadership:**
- Provide examples of how you have demonstrated leadership as an organization and in the community you serve.
- For example, describe awards received by the organization or individuals within the organization, public positions of leadership such as staff serving on other community boards, or participation in community events, task forces, and other community activities.

c) **Success in Securing Match Resources:**
- **Current grantees only**, describe your successes and challenges in securing match resources for prior grant awards, including the current grant cycle and, if applicable, previous awards.

3. **Success in Securing Community Support that Recurs, Expands in Scope, Increases in Amount, and is More Diverse**

a) **Collaboration:**
- Describe any collaborations you have developed that increase the quality and reach of services you provide.
- Discuss the roles that community organizations, including faith-based organizations, play in these collaborations.

b) **Local Financial and In-kind Contributions:**
- Discuss examples of how such contributions have continued over time, expanded in scope, increased in amount, or become more diverse.

c) **Wide Range of Community Stakeholders:**
- Describe the various types of community stakeholders in your organization.
- Discuss examples of how non-financial support from your community stakeholders has continued over time, expanded in scope, increased in amount, or become more diverse.

d) **Special Circumstances**:
- In applying the organizational capability criteria to each proposal, reviewers may also take into account the following circumstances of individual organizations:
- The age of your organization and its rate of growth; and
- Whether your organization serves a resource-poor community, such as a rural or remote community, a community with a high poverty rate, or a community with a scarcity of philanthropic and corporate resources.
- If you feel that any of these circumstances have an impact on your organizational capability that has not already been discussed, please describe it.

E. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy

1. **Cost Effectiveness**

a) **Corporation Cost per Member Service Year (MSY):**

- Your Corporation cost per MSY is determined by dividing the Corporation's share of budgeted grant costs by the number of member service years you are requesting in your grant.
- One MSY is equivalent to 1700 service hours. It does not include child care or the cost of the education award a member may earn through serving with your program.
- The Corporation cost per MSY will be automatically calculated once you enter your budget in eGrants.

b) **Diverse Non-Federal Support:**
- Demonstrate how your program has or will obtain diverse non-federal resources for program implementation and sustainability.
- Include a discussion of the non-Corporation resource commitments (in-kind and cash) that you have obtained, the additional commitments you plan to secure, and how you will secure them. <u>In the budget, you must list the sources of your match funds.</u>

c) **Decreased Reliance on Federal Support:**
- **<u>Current grantees only</u>**, describe the extent to which you are <u>increasing your share of costs to meet or exceed program goals</u>, or the extent to which you are proposing deeper impact or broader reach without a commensurate increase in federal costs.

2. Budget Adequacy

a) Discuss the adequacy of your budget to support your program design-- how it is sufficient, including adequate staffing, to support your program activities. Discuss how your budget is linked to your desired outputs and outcomes.

b) **EAP applicants only,** describe the costs you expect to incur for this program that will not be covered by Corporation funding. These costs might include staff salaries and benefits, travel, evaluation, living allowances or salaries for AmeriCorps members, supplies, and equipment. You will not be required to track or report on these expenditures. We will consider this information to assess the adequacy of your budget to support your program design.

> **EAP: Cost Effectiveness/Budget Adequacy**
> The Corporation cost per MSY will not be considered in assessing an EAP applicant's cost effectiveness. However, all the other indicators described in this section will apply and the cost effectiveness/budget adequacy section still equals 25% of the selection criteria weight.

c) In applying the cost effectiveness criteria to each proposal, reviewers may take into account the following circumstances of individual programs:
- Program age, or the extent to which your program brings on new sites;
- Whether your program or project is located in a resource-poor community, such as a rural or remote community, a community with a high poverty rate, or a community with a scarcity of corporate or philanthropic resources;

- Whether your program or project is located in a high-cost, or economically distressed community, measured by applying appropriate federal and state data; and
- Whether reasonable and necessary costs of your program or project are higher because they are associated with engaging or serving difficult-to-reach populations, or achieving greater program impact as evidenced through performance measures and program evaluation.

Please describe how any of these circumstances—not previously discussed—have had an impact on your program's cost effectiveness.

IV. Service Categories (Performance Measures Section)

In eGrants, the service categories are located in the Performance Measures section. Please select the three service categories that best represent your most significant areas of program activity. See *Appendix C*.

V. Performance Measures (Performance Measures Section)

Before you complete Section V. Performance Measures, please review 45 C.F.R. §§ 2522.500 – 2522.650.

The worksheet in *Appendix D* is provided as a tool to help you think through the development of your performance measures and assemble the information you will need to input into eGrants. For example, to create one set of aligned performance measures you would complete three worksheets—one for an output, one for an intermediate outcome and one for an end outcome. When completing the performance measures fields in eGrants, you must enter text into every text field. You may also find the Performance Measurement Toolkit on the Commission's website, http://www.nvsc.ne.gov/pdf/ac-perf-measuremt-toolkit.pdf to be helpful in creating your performance measures.

V. Budget (Budget Section)

Before you complete Section VI., Budget, please review 45 C.F.R. §§ 2521.35 – 2521.90, for match requirements. Requests to waive the matching requirements are only considered as part of the continuation request process.

A. Preparing Your Budget
Your proposed budget should be sufficient to allow you to perform the tasks described in your proposal narrative. We will consider the information you provide in this section as part of the Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy component of our selection criteria.

Follow the instructions in *Appendix E* to prepare your detailed budget. We recommend you prepare your budget following the same order as the Budget Worksheet in *Appendix F*.

Please crosscheck your work using the Budget Analysis Checklist in *Appendix I*. EGrants will create the budget and the budget narrative automatically from the detailed budget information you enter.

As you prepare your budget:
- All the amounts you request must be defined for a particular purpose. Do not include "miscellaneous," "contingency" or other undefined budget amounts.
- Do not include unallowable expenses, e.g., entertainment costs (which include food and beverage costs) unless they are justified as an essential component of an activity being budgeted.
- Do not include fractional amounts (cents).
- Refer to the NOFA or NOFO and AmeriCorps regulations at http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa and www.americorps.gov/rulemaking.

Please refer to the relevant OMB Circulars on allowable costs for further guidance. The OMB circulars are online at www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/circulars
- A-21 - Cost Principles for Educational Institutions
- A-87 - Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments
- A-122 - Cost Principles for Non Profit Organizations

EAP: Budget and Match Requirements

Applicants to the Education Award Program may only request a fixed amount of funding per MSY. Therefore, you do not complete a detailed budget. Follow the instructions in Appendix E to prepare your budget. Your budget worksheet can be found in Appendix F. Consult the most current NOFA or NOFO to determine the maximum amount of funding per MSY you may request. The matching requirements in 45 C.F.R. §§ 2521.40 through 2521.95, do not apply to EAP applicants.

VI. Additional Required Information (Documents Section)

In addition to your application submitted in eGrants, you are required to provide the information described below as part of your application.

A. Program Evaluation
Please review 45 C.F.R. §§ 2522.500 – 2522.540, and §§ 2522.700 – 2522.740. **The Commission requires that <u>all programs conduct an evaluation</u>, regardless of whether they receive competitive funds or formula funds.** If the applicant received a 3-year average of less than $500,000 in Corporation funds annually, you may conduct an **<u>internal evaluation</u>**. If the applicant received a 3-year average of more than $500,000 in Corporation funds annually, you must conduct an **<u>external evaluation</u>**.

> **Program Evaluation**
> EAP grantees are not required to perform an independent evaluation of their program. However, they are required to perform an internal program evaluation and submit that evaluation along with the appropriate recompeting application as described in 45 C.F.R. § 2522.710.

B. Financial Audit/Information
Applicants for new funding must provide their most recent A-133 audit, their organization's financial audit, or other financial statements if they have not had a formal audit.

C. Promoting Higher Education Service
This section applies *only to Higher Education Institutions*. See 45 C.F.R. § 2522.450 (b) (6).
   1) In your narrative, describe your institution's current efforts and plans to further   support community service through Federal Work Study.
   2) In your narrative, describe your efforts to promote and expand college student and/ or staff service, and to collaborate with campus community service offices and activities. AmeriCorps will also review your Federal Work Study data.

D. Submission Instructions for Program Evaluations and Audits
   1) Your program evaluation and audit information must be submitted to your State Commission by the application deadline. Our address is:
> The Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission
> P.O. Box   98927
> 6th floor, State Capitol
> Lincoln, NE 68509-8927
   2) When submitting this information, please attach a hard copy of your SF424 facesheet to the front of the documents so that we can connect it to the appropriate application.
   3) In eGrants, you must change the status of the evaluation and audit documents from the default "Not Sent" to the applicable status (Sent, Not Applicable, or Already on File at CNCS).

VIII.   Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants

The Corporation and other federal agencies are collaborating with the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI) to conduct a survey of organizations that apply for federal funding. The purpose of this voluntary information collection is to compile statistics on the types of organizations that apply to the Corporation for funds, such as number of employees, budget size, and self-identification as a faith-based/religious organization or a non-religious community-based organization.

This form is for applicants that are nonprofit private organizations (not including private universities). All information from the attached survey will be confidential and the responses will be aggregated in-house for a summary report. Information provided on your form will not be released and will not be considered in any way in making funding decisions.

There are two ways to complete the survey: (1) while preparing your application; and (2) after submitting your application.

1) To complete the survey while preparing your application, go to the eGrants Main Menu, click on Enter Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity, provide the requested information and submit.

2) If you submit your grant application without completing the survey, a pop-up box will appear and ask you if you would like to complete the survey. You may select Yes, No, or Remind Me Later. If you select "Remind Me Later," you will be asked to fill in the survey next time you attempt to submit an application to the Corporation for National and Community Service.

If you are submitting a paper application, the survey forms and instructions are found in *Appendix J.*

IX. Authorization, Assurances, and Certifications (Authorize and Submit Section)

Read the authorization, assurances, and certifications carefully. Complete each section of the Assurances and Certifications. See *Appendix A, # 17* and *Appendix K*. Be sure to check your application to make sure that there are no errors before submitting it.

Table 2: Summary of AmeriCorps Grant Programs

Grant Program	Eligibility Requirements	Corporation Cost per MSY[1]	Living Allowance Requirements	Budget and Match Requirements
State Competitive And Formula	- Program will operate within one state or U.S. Territory. - Program must be located in a state or U.S. Territory that has an approved State Commission for national and community service or alternative administrative entity. - Applicant must apply through the State Commission. - Public or private non-profit organizations, including labor organizations; community organizations, including faith-based organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within states or territories (e.g., cities, counties); Indian Tribes; or a partnership or consortia consisting of the aforementioned are eligible to apply. - Intermediaries are encouraged to apply.	***All AmeriCorps State applicants in NE must meet the $12,600/per MSY cost or lower. <u>Actual</u> MSY costs for existing grantees are examined during grant review.**	Full-time members must receive a living allowance between $11,100 and $21,800. A living allowance is not required for less than full-time members.	Minimum grantee share of 33% of operating costs and 15% of member support costs. Overall grantee share of total program costs increases gradually to 50% overall share by the tenth year of funding and any year thereafter.
State Education Award Program	Same as State Competitive except: Institutions for higher education and state education agencies may choose to apply for EAP funding either through their State Commission or directly to the Corporation, even if the proposed program will operate in just one state.	$400	Not required to pay a living allowance, but if grantees do so, they must comply with the maximum requirements set forth in the Living Allowance Requirements Section below.	Grantee responsible for all program costs above $400 per MSY provided by the Corporation.

1. **The Corporation cost per MSY (Member Service Year) is determined by dividing the Corporation's share of budgeted grant costs by the number of MSYs requested in the grant. One MSY is the equivalent of 1700 service hours, or one full-time AmeriCorps position. It does not include childcare or the cost of the education award a member may earn.**

Living Allowance Requirements: Generally, you must provide full-time members with a living allowance that is between $11,100 (minimum) and $22,200 (maximum). You are not required to provide living allowances for members serving less than full time. The federal share (including Corporation funds) may support up to 85% of the minimum living allowance amount. The maximum federal share of the living allowance for each type of member is shown in the chart below. Please note that if your half-time program requires more than 900 hours, but less than 1,700 hours, you may prorate the living allowance, but the maximum federal share remains $4,995.

Term of Service	Minimum # of Hours	Ed Award	MSY	Maximum Total Living Allowance	Maximum CNCS/Federal Share of Living Allowance
Full Time	1700	$4,725.00	1.000	$22,200	$9,435
One Year Half Time	900	$2,362.50	0.500	$11,750	$4,995
Two Year Half Time	900	$2,362.50	0.250	$11,750	$4,995
Reduced Half Time	675	$1,800.00	0.375	$8,815	$3,746
Quarter Time	450	$1,250.00	0.250	$5,875	$2,498
Minimum Time	300	$1,000.00	0.200	$3,915	$1,665

If you want to provide a living allowance in excess of the minimum, you must provide a grantee match for all funds over the amount in the column titled "Maximum CNCS/Federal Share of Living Allowance." For example, if you would like to provide a $12,000 living allowance to your full-time members, you may only request up to $9,435 per member in Corporation support for the living allowance. You would have to provide a match of $2,565 per member in non-federal cash. However, if you were to provide the minimum living allowance of $11,100 per member and requested the maximum Corporation support of $9,435 per member, your match would be $1,665 per member in non-federal cash.

How to Submit Your New or Recompeting Grant Request:
- All New or Recompeting subapplicants will submit via eGrants by **December 11, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. CST**.
- New or Recompeting applicants will need to create a new application in eGrants. An eGrants Technical Assistance session is scheduled for October, 2006. Additional information will be provided by the Commission on the eGrants submission process via our website www.nvsc.ne.gov . Please call the NVSC office.
- Edit your new or recompeting application as directed in the instructions. By creating an application in a Word file, you will be able to copy and past information directly into eGrants. Separate input of data may need to be made for your performance measurements and budget/budget narrative. When you have completed your edits, click the **SUBMIT** button. If your eGrants application has been submitted and cleared without errors, Commission staff will give one final review and it will be forwarded to the Grant Review Committee for consideration.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR
STATE CONTINUATION REQUESTS

The following instructions for submitting a continuation request apply only to programs that are currently in their first or second year of operation within a three-year grant cycle. If your program is currently in the final year of its grant cycle, you must apply using the application instructions for new and recompeting programs.

Be sure you also review the RFA when preparing your request. If you have questions about the content of your continuation request, please contact the Commission at 402-471-6225. Please ensure your eGrants account is up to date and begin the submission process at least three weeks before the due date, to allow for any technical difficulties you might have. If you experience problems using eGrants, contact the NE Commission at: 402-471-6225, or the eGrants Help Desk at (888) 677.7849 or (202) 606.7506, or email at egrantshelp@cns.gov during Eastern Standard Time working hours.

What to Include in Your Continuation Request:
Your request consists of the following components.

I.	**SF424 Facesheet**	**(Appendix A)**
II.	**Narrative**	
III.	**Performance Measurements**	**(Appendix D)**
IV.	**Budget**	**(Appendix E, F, and I)**

I. SF424 Facesheet (Applicant and Application Section)

Update the Applicant Information and Application Information sections in eGrants if necessary. See _Appendix A_.

II. Narrative (Narratives Section

Provide a brief narrative summarizing your progress to date toward meeting your performance measures for the current grant period and describing any changes you are proposing to your program. Enter your narrative in the _Summary of Accomplishments; Program Narrative with sub-headings under Outcomes, Rationale and Approach, Member Outputs and Outcomes, Community Outputs and Outcomes; Organizational Capability; and Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy_; as appropriate. Please provide headings to each section of your Narrative. These headings should be capitalized since when you transfer this information into eGrants, it has no formatting capability. **The maximum length of your narrative is 8,000 characters**. All narrative hardcopies shall have 1-inch margins, and be 12-point font.

III. Performance Measures (Performance Measures Section)

Your performance measures are copied from your previous year's application into your continuation request. You will need to revise your performance measures. Please do the following:

- For each primary service performance measure, select an Output, Intermediate Outcome, and End Outcome.
- For all other significant activity, select a performance measure type—an Output and Intermediate Outcome **OR** End Outcome
- You do not need to complete the "Need to be Addressed" section so please type "not applicable" in that text box.
- Review and update your performance measures if necessary.

Please utilize the Performance Measurement Form in *Appendix D.*

IV. Budget (Budget Section, 1, 2, and 3)

Provide a detailed budget for the upcoming year. Please refer to **Table 2** and **Member Living Allowance Requirements** provided in the instructions for New and Recompeting applicants for guidance on changes for 2006. Incorporate any required Corporation increases, such as an increase to the member living allowance into your budget. Your budget from the previous year's application is copied into your continuation request so you can make the necessary adjustments. Please note that the minimum living allowance was raised to $11,100 per member, the federal cost per member is higher at $12,600 per member, and the maximum federal daily rate you can charge for consulting fees allowed was raised to $540 per day. *All* AmeriCorps State applicants in Nebraska must comply with the federal $12,600/cost per full-time member at a minimum. Actual MSY costs for existing grantees are examined during grant review.

Continuation Budget Increase and Expansion Requests:
In 2007, your continuation request may include an increase of up to 1% of your approved 2006 budget. Requests for expansion (i.e. additional MSYs and/or funding) are considered on an annual basis by the Commission. The Corporation expects to approve very few requests for expansion. Preference will be given to expansions that include low cost MSYs and expansions of programs demonstrating outcomes that have exceeded their goals.

How to Request a Waiver of the Match Requirements:
Please see 45 C.F.R. §§ 2521.35 – 2521.90, for match and waiver requirements. **If you are requesting a waiver to the alternative match requirements described in** § **2521.60(b**), we will determine your eligibility by considering the following:

a) **Program Location**: Except when we approve otherwise, we will determine the location of your program based on the legal applicant's address. If you believe that the legal applicant's address is not the appropriate way to consider the location of your program, you must provide relevant facts about your program location in your waiver request. The Corporation will, in its sole discretion, determine whether some other address is more appropriate for determining a program's location.

b) **Rural County:** In determining whether a program is rural, we will consider the most recent Beale code rating published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the county in which the program is located. Any program located in a county with a **Beale code of 6, 7, 8 or 9** is eligible to apply for the alternative match requirement. See *Appendix J* for the table of Beale codes.

c) **Severely Economically Distressed County**: In determining whether a program is located in a severely economically distressed county, we will consider the following list of county-level characteristics. See *Appendix L* for a list of website addresses where this publicly available information can be found.

   - The county-level per capita income is less than or equal to 75 percent of the national average for all counties using the most recent census data or Bureau of Economic Analysis data;
   - The county-level poverty rate is equal to or greater than 125 percent of the national average for all counties using the most recent census data; and
   - The county-level unemployment is above the national average for all counties for the previous 12 months using the most recently available Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

To Apply for a Match Waiver:
   - If you are requesting a waiver to the alternative match requirements specified in § 2521.60(b), then you must demonstrate that your program is either located in a rural county or in a severely economically distressed community as defined above. Also describe the efforts you have taken to raise the resources needed to meet the matching requirements.
   - If you are requesting a waiver based on the lack of available financial resources at the local level, you must provide the information described in § 2521.70.
   - Your State Commission must approve your waiver request before it is forwarded to the Corporation. Once approved by the Corporation, the subgrantee will be directed to input this request in the designated section of eGrants.

How to Submit Your Continuation Request:
   - All Continuation subapplicants will submit their applications in eGrants by **December 11, 2006 by 5:00 p.m. CST**.
   - To create your continuation request in eGrants, click **Continuation** on your eGrants homepage. You will be shown a list of grants that are eligible to be continued. Select the grant you wish to continue. **Make sure you select the correct one**. The system will copy your most recently awarded application as a base to create your continuation application.

Edit your continuation application as directed in the continuation request instructions. When you have completed your edits, click the **SUBMIT** button.   If your eGrants application has been submitted and cleared without errors, Commission staff will give one final review and it will be included in the final aggregate AmeriCorps State application package submitted to the Corporation for funding.

APPLICATION DEADLINES

The application deadline date and the planned TA session should be carefully noted.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: December 11, 2006 at 5:00 p.m.

Mail supporting documentation (A-133 audits and other required documents) to:

      Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission
      P.O. Box 98927
      Lincoln, NE 68509-8927

If sending UPS/FedEx:

      Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission
      State Capitol, 6th floor
      1445 K Street
      Lincoln, NE 68509

AmeriCorps RFA - Technical Assistance Workshops:
***In-Person TA Session* -**
An in-person eGrants technical assistance session will be scheduled in late October 2006 in Lincoln. Please RSVP to the Commission office at (402) 471-6228, 1-800-291-8911, or by e-mail to peter.cales@hhss.ne.gov by October 16, 2006 to attend the eGrants TA session.

***Written TA on the NVSC Website* -**
The Commission will respond to all questions in writing every two weeks on Mondays beginning October 23, 2006. The questions and answers will be posted on the Commission website October 23, November 6, November 20, and December 4, 2006 depending upon the extent of the questions the Commission receives regarding the RFA. Questions regarding the RFA should be addressed to the following staff:
- **Peter Cales for program and training questions**
  - ➤ **Peter.cales@hhss.ne.gov**
  - ➤ **(402) 471-6228**
- **Janet Schmidt for financial questions**
  - ➤ **Janet.schmidt@hhss.ne.gov**
  - ➤ **(402) 471-6225**

***Orientation to AmeriCorps for New Applicants* -**
NVSC staff will schedule an AmeriCorps Orientation in October for any organization that has never been an NVSC Subgrantee and would like to consider submitting an RFA for the 2007-2008 funds. Please call the Commission office at (402) 471-6225 to arrange the orientation.

To request this document in alternative format please contact Peter Cales at (402) 471-6228 or peter.cales@hhss.ne.gov

Overview of the Selection Process and Criteria

The Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission completes a comprehensive review of the final AmeriCorps State applications submitted through the eGrants system by the required Commission deadline. Commission staff will do an initial compliance review and will then forward grant applications to a Grant Review Committee of the Commission where they will be further analyzed and scored. The Commission is revisiting the objective criteria and categories as well as the weighting and scoring system this year. The final determination of Criteria, Percentages, Sub-Categories and Weights will be **posted on the NVSC Website by November 10, 2006**.

Grant Review Process & Notification

Successful applicants will be notified by telephone and in writing subsequent to the Commission's notification from the Corporation. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing.

Recommendations are made to the full Commission at a scheduled meeting to determine what AmeriCorps programs will be forwarded to the Corporation for competitive funding. Often times, there are recommendations for subapplicants to make necessary improvements based on questions raised during the grant review process, before their final applications are submitted. The recommended improvements – especially for *Continuing* applicants - are not only based on the quality of their AmeriCorps State applications submitted, but also other variables such as how well applicants addressed: site monitoring issues involving program management, meeting performance outcomes in their progress reports, audit findings or questioned costs, and any major issues with recruitment/retention/diversity.

Once the Commission approves all AmeriCorps State grant proposals to be submitted, the Commission forwards them to the Corporation for National and Community Service, as part of an aggregate grant submission, with recommendations. The Corporation selects or disapproves applications for funding using a multi-stage process that may include review by panels of experts, Corporation staff, and approval by the Chief Executive Officer or the Board of Directors, or their designee. The review by panels of experts includes individuals such as community service practitioners, educators, administrators, former national service participants, and specialists in the areas such as the environment, independent senior living, public safety, education, and homeland security. Because the participants on these panels are outside experts, you should not assume that they are familiar with your grant program, even if you are recompeting. Please provide sufficient information in your application for a reviewer who is unfamiliar with your program.

Competitive Award announcements are expected June 1, 2006, with Formula announcements soon after.   All final grant awards are made by the program start date.

Execution of Cooperative Agreements

When funding for successful applications has been secured from the Corporation for National and Community Service for each successful applicant, a Cooperative Agreements that serves as the contract for the AmeriCorps grant will be executed by the Executive Director of NVSC and the authorized official of the grantee organization.

The appendices required are attached to the end of the RFA:

Appendix A – SF 424 Title Page
Appendix B – Program Model and Design
Appendix C – Service Categories Checklist
Appendix D – Performance Measurement Worksheet
Appendix E & F – Budget Instructions and Narrative
Appendix J – EEO Form
Appendix K – Assurances & Certifications
Appendix L – Beales Codes & County-Level Economic Data